

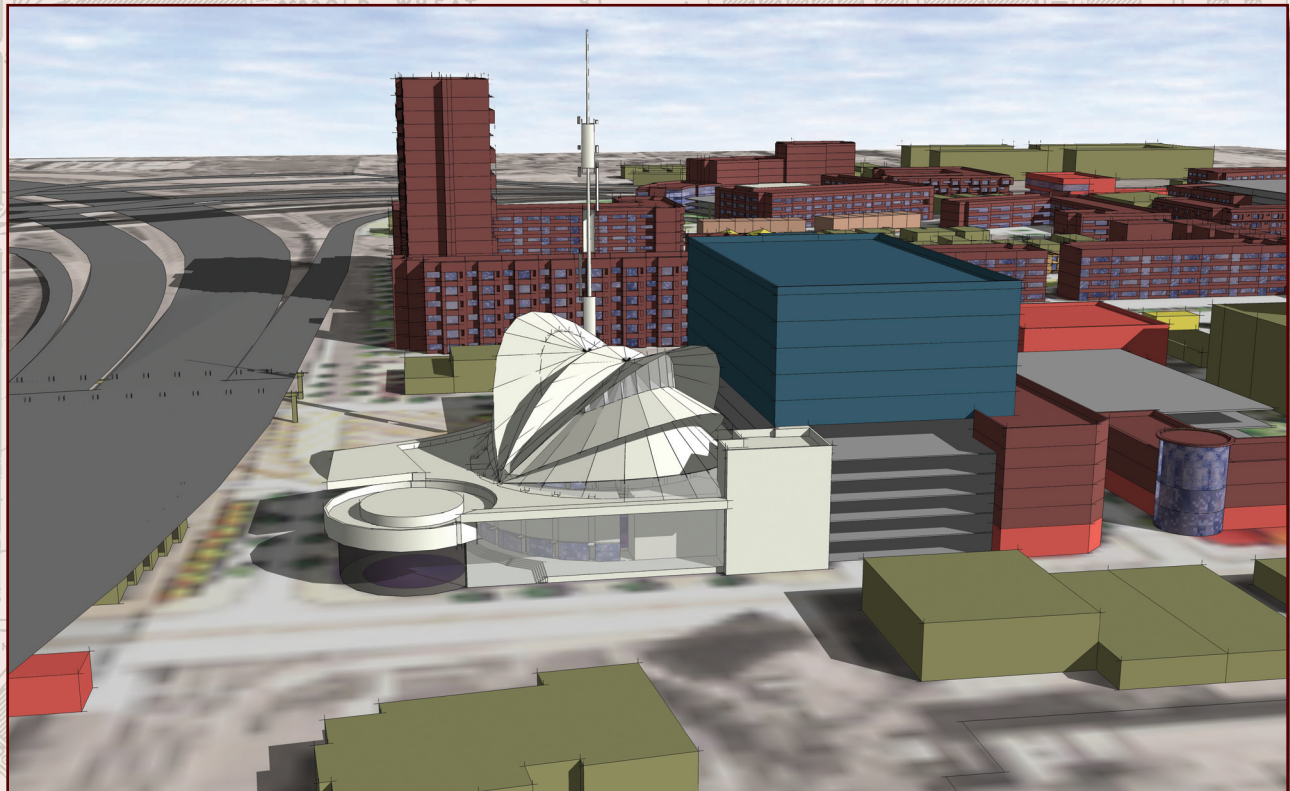


Butler - Auburn Redevelopment Plan Update

Part IV : Redevelopment Plan Elements



Cultural Arts Center, looking North



Part 4 Redevelopment Plan Elements

This Part 4 contains the heart of the 'plan' for improving the Butler / Auburn community. In particular, Part 4 focuses in on the future land use and zoning strategy, a detailed development approach for thirteen catalytic projects, a concept for public improvements, and several technical elements that satisfy the State of Georgia urban redevelopment law requirements.

Plan concepts, projects and ideas have been formulated through an exhaustive, community-based process. Individual projects have been discussed with various property owners and tested in market-based pro formas in an attempt to create a reasonably realistic picture of new development. In addition, plan concepts and projects have been validated with a representative Planning Committee as well as a public workshop.

All projects, concepts and ideas as contained within Part 4 are designed to fulfill the Vision, Goals and Objectives as stated previously in this report. It should be noted that unlike several older planning efforts, this plan is rooted in an understanding of the current real estate market for Atlanta's Downtown and East Side. Furthermore, the presence of the Eastside Tax Allocation District (TAD) provides a very significant source of project-based capital that has heretofore been a missing element in the consideration of revitalizing Sweet Auburn. Finally, there exists a re-energized political and regulatory framework that has been spurred by several recent development projects in the area (e.g., Sweet Auburn Village, Auburn Glenn, Edgewood Lofts). This new framework now sees the reality and impact of actual development - i.e., beyond the rhetoric of previous 'paper visions' for Sweet Auburn - and is prepared to provide the necessary changes and support for exciting, yet compatible new development.

Figure 4.0:
Prince Hall
Masonic Lodge



(Image: GSU Archives, Lane Brother / Tracy O'Neil Collections)

4.1 Marketing / Branding

In the ten years since the original Butler-Auburn Redevelopment Plan was adopted, there has been the realization that reversing the advance of neighborhood decay is not the only objective of a revitalization effort; and that Sweet Auburn is much more important to American culture than just another rejuvenated downtown neighborhood. The landmark district appellation and the inclusion of the Sweet Auburn narrative in the visitor literature to the King National Historic Site are a testament to this fact. Yet, precious little has been discussed about physically manifesting the story of Sweet Auburn in every renovation project and every new development. Historic preservation of the artifacts themselves constitutes an important aspect of this, as do the several different walking tour guides and pamphlets. Yet leaders in legendary African-American neighborhoods like Harlem, U Street / Shaw, and Beale Street have recognized the value in creating a strong, consistent theme that is represented through design of infrastructure - a value that not only allows visitors to easily immerse themselves in the cultural cross-section of the area, but implies historic preservation as a crucial component of new development.

This thematic programming or 'branding' of the district through adjustments and additions to the built environment at its best provides subtle and intuitive notations for the visitor; but at its worst can degenerate into a parody of the characteristics it intends to celebrate. It is therefore important that marketing Sweet Auburn in this way must be handled with sensitivity and respect for tradition. For example, in the U Street Corridor of Washington D.C., district maps and photographs animate the city's well-built cultural tourism markers (below left); while in Memphis the emphasis is on spotlighting the entertainment roots of the area through neon signage (below right). Each of the thirteen catalytic projects in the following pages use preservation as the portal to linking with the 'storyline' of Sweet Auburn discussed in Part 3.

Figure 4.1:
Branding



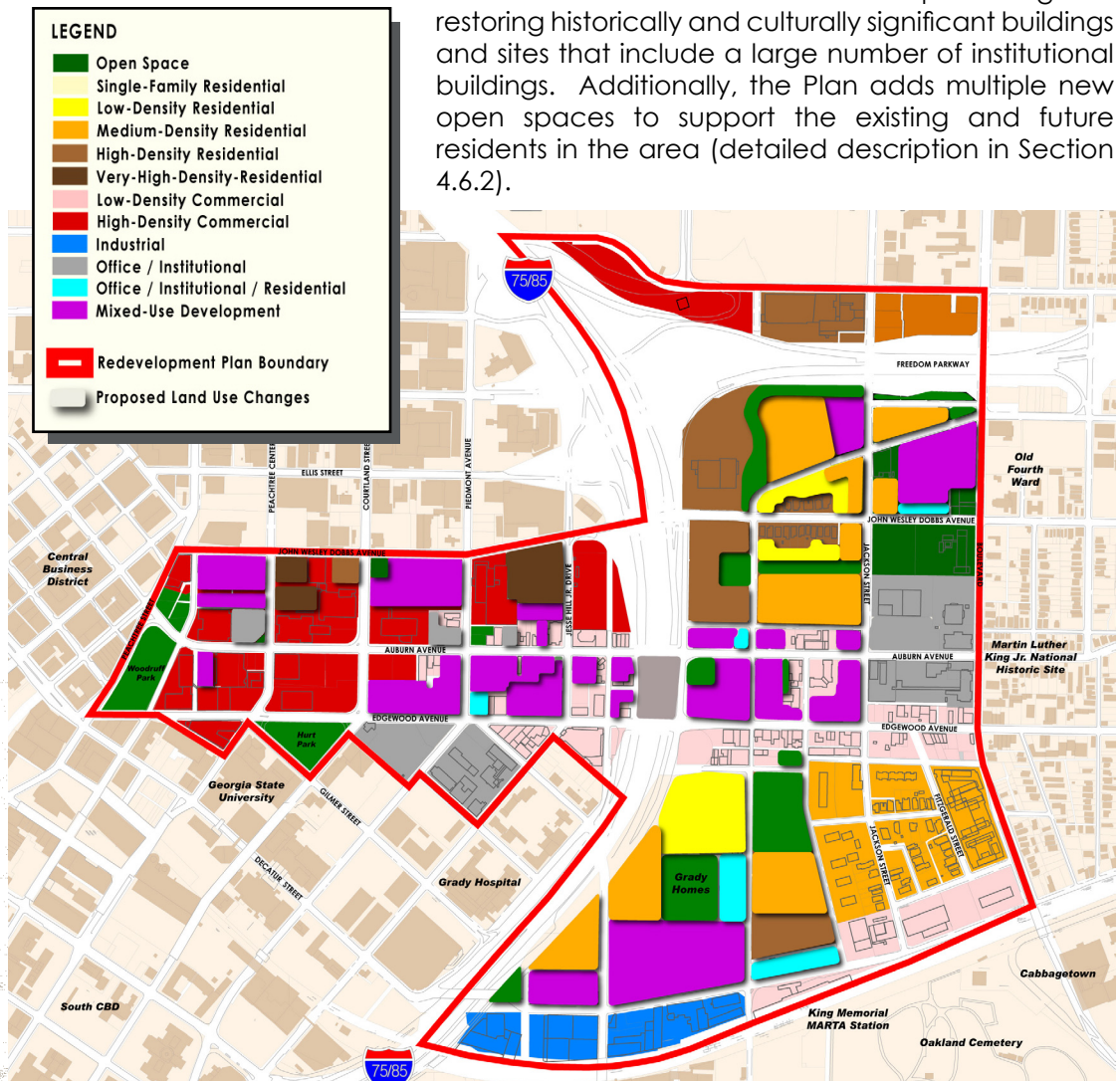
4.2 Future Land Use Plan

As the process of updating and renewing the Landmark District and conventional zoning districts takes place, it is essential to create a compatible land use map that allows for the proposed zoning to be implemented. The Future Land Use Plan reflects the overall theme for future development envisioned in the Sweet Auburn district. It incorporates both the community's vision as well as the planning team's analysis of market demand and potential in this area. Eleven different land use categories describe these future land uses, including a mixed-use development category which would include a combination of two or more of the other land uses. The categories are consistent with those contained in the current City of Atlanta Comprehensive Development Plan (CDP) 15-Year Land Use Plan.

Within the study area, a majority of the potential redevelopment sites are planned as mixed-use developments. Of these, redevelopment sites west of the interstate have a larger commercial component due to their proximity to Downtown; while projects east of the expressway involve more residential development that transitions into the existing historic single-family neighborhood. The overall intention is to add a variety of housing products while encouraging the commercial viability of the area. These mixed-use projects (and associated densities) are described in detail in Section 4.5. Parcels selected for redevelopment include existing parking lots, vacant land, and low density non-contributing buildings. In addition to these large-scale projects,

the Future Land Use Plan also calls for preserving and restoring historically and culturally significant buildings and sites that include a large number of institutional buildings. Additionally, the Plan adds multiple new open spaces to support the existing and future residents in the area (detailed description in Section 4.6.2).

Figure 4.2:
Future Land Use



4.3 Future Zoning Plan

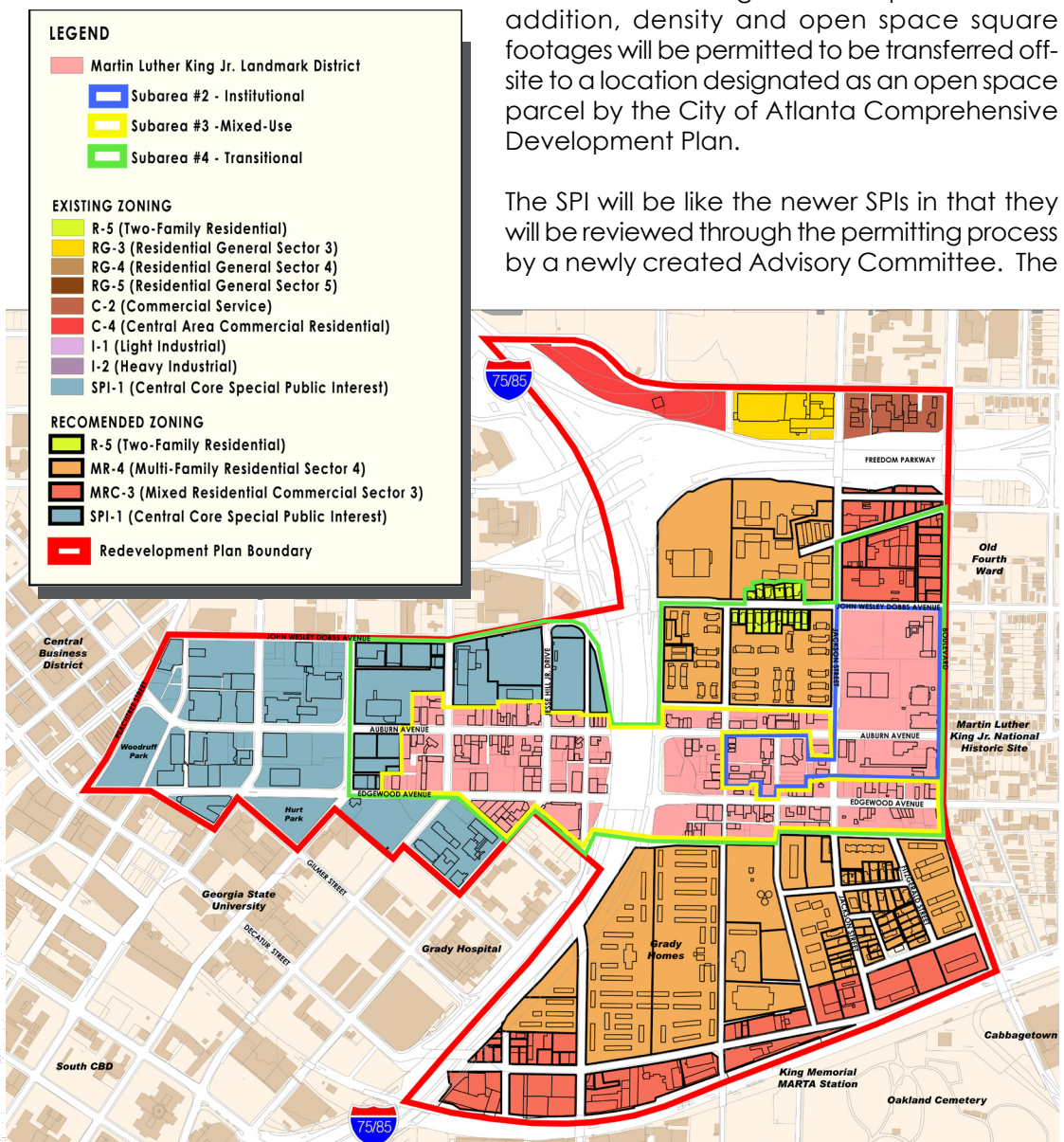
The existing zoning pattern discussed in Section 3.2 describes the three basic zoning geographies overlaying the Butler-Auburn study area – the Martin Luther King Landmark District, the Downtown core SPI-1, and the series of conventional districts covering about half of the eastern end. Of these, only SPI-1 has undergone an effort to update the regulations to reflect both the innovative provisions contained in the city's new Quality-Of-Life codes and a policy emphasis on the provision of housing, including affordable or workforce housing. These updated standards are consistent with the newer SPIs and will be specifically patterned after the Midtown SPI-16 and SPI-17. The new SPI-1 will not be an overlay and will in fact supplant the existing underlying SPI zoning and any attached conditions.

The new SPI-1 regulations will require sidewalks, supplemental zones, street furniture zones, building delineation from the 3rd floor and below, window fenestration minimums, side yards, rear yards, loading and mechanical screening, block sizes and parking requirements. In addition, bonus language will be introduced to provide incentives for specific elements. For example, residential density can equal an FAR of 35 when

affordable housing units are provided. In addition, density and open space square footages will be permitted to be transferred off-site to a location designated as an open space parcel by the City of Atlanta Comprehensive Development Plan.

The SPI will be like the newer SPIs in that they will be reviewed through the permitting process by a newly created Advisory Committee. The

Figure 4.3.1:
Future Zoning



Downtown SPI Design Review Board will review and comment on all new Special Administrative Permit applications through the Bureau of Planning so as to assist the City in the development and review process. This Advisory Committee will be made up of the area's key stakeholders including neighborhood, property owner, business owner and institutional representatives.

In short, much work has gone into the development of zoning standards for this area and as such, this SPI district needs to be adopted into this study area as-is and unchanged. The process has included a large group of property owners, neighborhoods, government agencies and other major stakeholders of the area; they are kept informed of the progress, and know that it is about to be adopted. The Butler-Auburn Redevelopment Plan Update does not need to redo what has already been done by the current and soon-to-be completed zoning revision process.

4.3.1 Assessment of Existing Landmark District Provisions

The existing Martin Luther King Jr Landmark District was adopted in 1982. At that time, the district regulations were progressive for the City in terms of what could be done through zoning. Since that time, the City has made tremendous progress and advancements in zoning. In particular, urban design requirements and pedestrian elements have taken on a more prominent role in current City zoning mechanisms.

The Landmark District is now in need of updating to enable this originally innovative zoning district to regain its progressive status. Because of the growth in the Downtown, Old Fourth Ward neighborhood and within the Butler-Auburn neighborhood itself, this District must be updated to reflect a new community. Not only has the existing district grown out of sink with the area's growth, the district has also been surpassed by the requirements within the newer Quality of Life Districts and Special Public Interest Districts that exist within the City and adjacent to the existing Landmark District.

Within the existing district, urban design elements that control building setbacks, window fenestration, primary entrances, façade design and signage are lacking. Open space standards, density mixes and

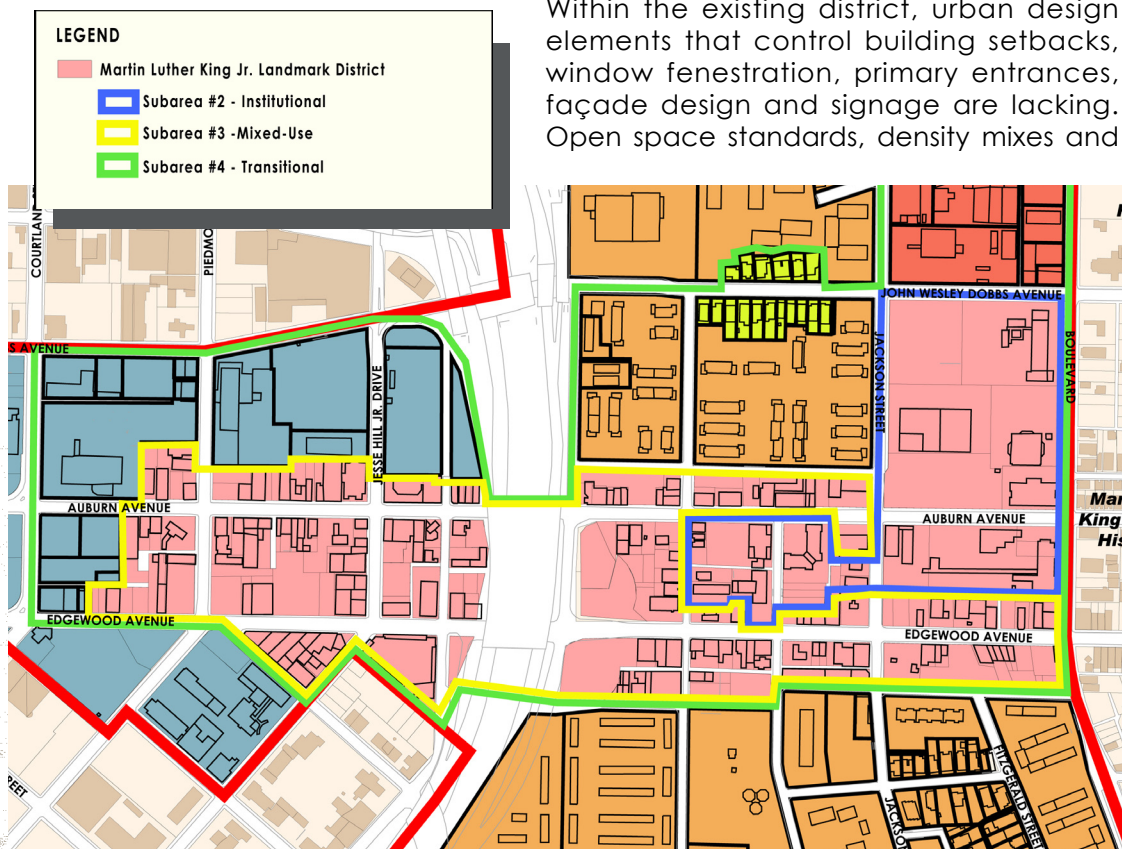


Figure 4.3.2:
Landmark District
Subareas



parking ratios are in desperate need of change to reflect the needs of the area. And finally, the uses and scale of development permitted in each subarea must be revisited as the original established subareas have changed in many ways since the creation of the district.

4.3.2 Proposed Modifications to Landmark District

The first step in updating the District regulations must be to consolidate the existing subareas that make up the District. New subareas must be drawn to accurately reflect those areas that have commonality in intent and design. The result of this exercise is that the 6 original subareas (Auburn Avenue Residential, Residential, Institutional, Auburn Commercial, Edgewood Commercial; and Transitional) become streamlined into 4 new subareas (Residential, Institutional, Mixed Use and Transitional). This consolidation reflects the primary areas of use within the District today. The Edgewood/Auburn spine constitute the mixed use core of the District; the area east of Boulevard is predominantly single-family neighborhood; the King Center area is of an institutional character; and finally the areas that buffer the District to the west and north represent a buffer area that is not to be controlled through this District but is close enough to the District that it needs to be reviewed by Atlanta Urban Design Commission staff.

A significant change for the District involves the approach to controlling density. The new District regulations will regulate density as a result of regulating building heights and building setbacks. These dimensions will form a building envelope within which new development may be permitted to be built. This will in essence form the density controls for all new development. By removing the density calculation and controlling density through building design, density calculations will be removed as a confusing side effect of the District. An additional advantage is that this will reinforce that this District is designed to reflect the historic scale and building form of setbacks and heights and not an arbitrary calculation that would prove difficult to implement on a block-by-block basis.

Beyond the density control changes, the area of greatest change is the treatment of urban design elements in the District. While each subarea will have specific regulations dealing with uses and heights, the entire District will be unified in its urban design treatment. All development within the District will be required to have sidewalks, street trees, window fenestration, sidewalk level entrances, side or rear parking facilities, open space provisions, building façade articulation and historic façade massing and scale.

These urban design elements will provide commonality to the entire district and will bind all of the subareas together. Many of these urban design controls are the implementation of the Auburn Area Commercial District Design Guidelines which were completed in 1990 and to date have yet to be incorporated into the Landmark District regulations. The latest regulations found in the City Special Public Interest Districts and Quality of Life Districts also are included in this revised District to ensure that the latest and most innovative language will be utilized to guide development within the District.

4.3.3 Proposed Modifications to Other Districts

Those areas that immediately surround the Landmark District and constitute the remaining zoning district of the Butler/Auburn Redevelopment Area are currently made up of a combination of the Downtown Special Public Interest District, R, RG and C zoning districts.

Special Public Interest District 1 abuts the area along the entire western edge of the area. Fortunately, this area has just undergone an extensive planning and zoning



initiative through the leadership of Central Atlanta Progress and the City of Atlanta. This new updated SPI district is scheduled to be submitted for official adoption before the end of 2005. This district need not be edited as a result of this process.

A very small node of single-family residential exists on Irwin Street, between Irwin and Hilliard Streets. This node is an island of single family, surrounding by higher density properties. The properties are on both sides of the street and stretch for a block's length. This pocket will remain so as to ensure the preservation of the historic character of this block. The properties are currently zoned R5 and will continue to be zoned as such as part of this plan.

The majority of the remaining parcels are currently zoned under the RG district. This zoning district allows for multi-family residential development. This plan calls for all properties immediately south and north of the Landmark District to be rezoned to the MR 4 zoning classification. This new Quality of Life district requires all of the urban design elements that are critical including relationship of building to street standards, residential window treatment, unit entrance requirements, sidewalks, street trees, screened parking, building façade treatments and open space requirements. This MR 4 designation reflects both the current trends of development and the vision of this plan.

The final pieces of the zoning plan represent the mixed use portions of the area which are found on the fringes. The properties to the northeast fronting Freedom Parkway and Boulevard, and the properties with frontage on DeKalb Avenue are currently zoned to the C district designation. All of these properties are to be zoned to the MRC 3 designation as part of this plan. As with MR 4, the MRC 3 district is another Quality of Life district and as such will require all of the same urban design elements that are required in the MR district. This zoning designation is reflective of current development trends and of the vision of this plan.



4.4 Illustrative Plan

Auburn Avenue's uniqueness lies in its variety as it transitions from the high-density commercial district on its western end to a historic single-family neighborhood on its eastern edge. Connecting these changing uses and densities is a continuous thread of the Auburn Avenue storyline which goes back to the days when this district was a thriving African-American center of trade and commerce. The Illustrative Plan brings together the recommendations for development and open space projects which feed into this storyline.

This district is perhaps the greatest opportunity to create a mixed-use neighborhood in the core of Downtown Atlanta that blends old and new into a powerful story of the city's coming of age. Thirteen catalytic projects have been identified in this plan with the hope that they will stimulate the development market ultimately transitioning this historic but forlorn district to a thriving in-town neighborhood. Each one of these projects has been designed with sensitivity to its historical significance, location and surrounding fabric.

Closer to Peachtree Street, development is oriented towards high-density mixed use, predominately commercial, to account for the high land values and proximity to Downtown's commercial core. This includes a large mixed-use project at the site north of Herndon Plaza, which incorporates a major office building, condominiums and storefront retail. Another project closer to Downtown is identified at the intersection of Courtland Street and Edgewood Avenue where there is an opportunity to create an urban-scale mixed-use / hospitality project potentially serving Georgia State University.

Prospective partnerships with area institutions provide valuable opportunities to develop new residential and commercial facilities while accommodating the growth of these institutional landmarks. Prominent amongst these is the Big Bethel AME Church and the Bethel Towers adjacent to it. Renovations to Bethel Tower and new housing on the parking lot site just north offer an opportunity for affordable housing along the corridor. This project would complement the Sweet Auburn Village mixed-use condominium project currently planned south of Big Bethel between Piedmont and Hill. Additionally, partnerships with Butler CME and Butler YMCA create the opportunity for expanding YMCA's program and the redevelopment of the historic Herndon Building.

East of the expressway, development is more focused towards a variety of residential products including townhouses, lofts, and multifamily buildings (both rental and ownership). A majority of this new residential will replace aging apartment complexes such as Grady Homes, Wheat Street Gardens and Atlanta Overlook. Additionally, new housing is planned on the parking lot north of the National Park Service visitor center.

Perhaps one of the most important of all these projects is the Cultural Arts facility that would create a new institutional landmark in Sweet Auburn. Envisioned to re-establish the district's history as a vibrant entertainment venue, this anchor project will incorporate residential and commercial components to create a comprehensive mixed-use development.

Overall, the Illustrative Plan shows how these projects work together with planned public open spaces and supporting infrastructure improvements to create a dynamic template for the comprehensive, historically-appropriate, diverse redevelopment of Sweet Auburn.